

BIBLICAL REPENTANCE IS IMPORTANT

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The following is by Pastor Buddy Smith, Malanda, Queensland <smiletex@bigpond.net.au> --

My study is a small room at the end of our garage, but I have a “window on the world” that lets me browse libraries around the world and study the works of wise men. My window is the good websites on the internet that offer sermon downloads, study helps, or books I have longed for.

I recently stumbled across two intersecting lines of Divine Providence. A book I had wanted to buy for forty years was reprinted and is now available at a good price, and the same day I saw the ad for the book I found a website that offered the book as a free download. The book is by Harry Ironside and is titled Except Ye Repent. You can download it or read it at <http://www.wholesomewords.org/siteindex.html> (a good website to bookmark.)

The doctrine of repentance has fallen on hard times in many churches. We preach much about faith, but are strangely silent on the subject of repentance. These two essential doctrines, repentance and faith, are the femurs of the body of Christ. By that I mean that they are the longest and strongest bones in our doctrinal skeleton. They are the load bearing framework of truth in our preaching that makes the long strides of evangelistic work possible. They provide the balance we need to stand against the wiles of the Devil. On these we run the race with patience. By these we bear one another's burdens. This is not to make light of the glorious gospel of Christ. Surely that is the heart of the body. Nor is it intended to ignore the authority of Christ as head of the church, But the femurs must be repentance and faith. Dr. Paul Brand once told of a man he examined who had no tibia in one of his legs. His foot was held in place by a brace he wore over the outside of his leg. So it is in the body of Christ, the loss of any part of our doctrinal skeleton will require us to replace it with an invention of man, and will impede our walk, our warnings, and our warfare. Fundamental churches are in dire need of sound, doctrinal preaching. In a world that resembles Ezekiel's valley of dry bones with all its scattered and lifeless philosophies, pastors who are committed to preaching the whole counsel of God display to men the skeletal framework of sound doctrine. There is a tendency, as Tom Malone once said, for modern churches to be composed mostly of jawbone and wishbone and lacking in backbone. It is only when we assemble the whole “skeleton” together, including the femurs of repentance and faith, that the life of the body of Christ can be what God intended.

So what about the doctrine of repentance? Is it only an Old Testament doctrine and no longer needed by the church? Is it a work for salvation? Is it the same as faith? Is it absent from the preaching of Christ and the apostles?

I see some very interesting sights as I look out my window on the world. I see men, good men, looking everywhere but in the Word of God for answers to these questions. It is this simple observation that troubles me. Isn't the man of God to look first to God by looking in the Scriptures for answers? Even without Harry Ironside's book, or anybody else's books or sermons, I should be able to dig out the truth about repentance by simply consulting a concordance and then studying every verse in the Bible on the subject. After all, in the words of the old black preacher, "The Bible sho' do throw a lot of light on that there commentary.

Repentance is not just an Old Testament doctrine. It is not a work for salvation and never was. It is a change of mind that involves a change of attitude toward myself, my sin, and my God. It is a change of mind that can no longer tolerate disobedience to God. It is as much a forerunner of faith as John the Baptist (with his clarion call for Israel to repent!) was to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is as inseparable from saving faith as John was from Christ. It is the continual experience of the saints, whether it is Job (42:5,6) or Peter, or Paul, or the Corinthian church members (II Cor. 7:8-11). It is as old as the book of Job and as new as the book of Revelation.

There are strange people on the streets these days. Body piercings and mutilations of every kind shock us speechless. But surely the worst mutilation of all is that of the body of Christ, scarred and twisted almost beyond recognition by pastors who are forever removing the doctrinal and structural framework of our faith. One of the Hollywood harlots of years ago is reported to have had two of her lower ribs removed in order to enhance her figure. We scoff at this mutilation and then turn a blind eye toward present day mutilation of the body of Christ. I

visited one of these mutilated churches not long ago for an ordination service (never again!) The head elder preached his Calvinistic errors to a congregation of ecumenical hippies, old and young. The pianist, in his baseball cap and tattered jeans played his five note CCM chorus (of 25 verses) and the congregation waved their hands in the air and shouted hallelujah. Oh yes, and the candlesticks on the platform were filled with votive candles, burning brightly.

How did a Baptist church come to this mutilated distortion of the Christian faith? It's quite simple, somewhere along the way, the church did what teens are doing all over the world. The church decided it was stylish to mutilate the body by adding to or taking away from that "form of sound words" (2 Tim. 1:13) which is given us in the Holy Scriptures.

I suspect the world is watching to see how long we can remain standing after we have discarded the femur of repentance.

No church has ever stood for long or gone far on one leg.

Isn't it about time to go back to the Bible and get our other leg back?

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